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FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7921  
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0740  
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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 1757  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 1686  
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 0031  
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 0483  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1376  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0391  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2254  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0340  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 1339  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 2362  
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 8618  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 2520  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 4517

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SUBJECT: ITALY AGREES ERITREA A CONCERN, ISAIAS TO VISIT  
BRUSSELS FOR TECHNICAL MEETING

REF: STATE 59532

Classified By: Political Military Counselor Jonathan R. Cohen for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to MFA Horn of Africa Office Director Fabrizio Pignatelli May 3. May 4, Pignatelli responded that while Italy is concerned about recent actions taken by Eritrea, like the decision to suspend membership in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Eritrean President Isaias will visit Brussels to meet with the EU commission to discuss cooperation assistance from the European Fund for Development. The meeting will not cover political issues, and while the GOI was not deeply involved in the visit, Italy joined the EU consensus on holding the meeting. Pignatelli acknowledged Italy was going through a difficult period with Eritrea bilaterally. The GOI understands U.S. concerns, Pignatelli said, but noted should also consider Eritrea's key role in bringing stability to the region.

2. (C) Pignatelli stressed that Eritrea did not always play a negative role, and highlighted Asmara's positive involvement in Darfur. With the Sudanese government taking a step forward in Tripoli, Pignatelli believed Eritrea had real influence with the rebel groups who would be key to resolving the Darfur situation. Special Envoy Natsios had welcomed Eritrea's initiative, according to Pignatelli. Pignatelli acknowledged that in other parts of the region Eritrea was playing a negative role, but Italy believed Eritrea had a key part to play in bringing stability to the Horn of Africa. Poloff noted that, nevertheless, the EU should discuss Eritrea's difficult behavior with Isaias, including on humanitarian and development assistance.  
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